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New York

President:	Mr. Pleuger	(Germany)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Belinga-Eboutou
	Chile	Mr. Maquieira
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mrs. D'Achon
	Guinea	Mr. Boubacar Diallo
	Mexico	Mrs. Arce de Jeannet
	Pakistan	Mr. Khalid
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation between Iraq and Kuwait

Letter dated 6 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/153).

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03-25093 (E)

The meeting resumed at 10.05 a.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Mauritius, Norway, Paraguay and Serbia and Montenegro, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius), Mr. Kolby (Norway), Mr. Lorzaga (Paraguay) and Mrs. Ninčić (Serbia and Montenegro) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should also like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 18 February 2003 from the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in which he requests that the Permanent Observer of the Holy See be allowed to deliver a statement during the Security Council's open debate on the item on its agenda entitled "The situation between Iraq and Kuwait". In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall, at the appropriate time, invite the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to address the Council.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Archbishop Migliore (Holy See) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I wish to inform all participants that I intend to suspend this morning's meeting at 12.30 p.m. We shall resume at 3 p.m., followed by consultations.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Qatar, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I wish to express our sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish you every success. I should also like to thank you for your response to the request of the Non-Aligned Movement to convene this extremely important meeting in order to give Member States an opportunity to express their views on the important matter being debated by the Council: the question of the critical situation in Iraq and the charges levelled against it that it possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Today, we are experiencing dire circumstances that place the world order at a crucial crossroads, an order represented in the United Nations and its purposes and principles and international law, which all seek to consolidate the rules of coexistence and international relations and to preserve the independence and sovereignty of all States. Indeed, those circumstances might thoroughly shake all the efforts that have been made since the Second World War to consolidate the rules of international peace and security and to avoid the scourges of war around the world. Aggravating our concern are the unknown appalling consequences of a new war, which have increased tension in the region and the rest of the world, with no way to foresee its outcome.

Member States joined the United Nations, accepted its Charter and committed themselves to working sincerely with all other States in order to bring views closer together, to strengthen international relations and to respect international treaties. This is done with a view to attaining the greater goal of living in peace and good-neighbourliness, so that States would unite their energies in order to maintain international peace and security and would not use military force, except to serve common interests, in order to preserve mankind's common heritage from war's devastation and destruction.

The State of Qatar has supported and continues to firmly support all efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution of the current world crisis related to the situation in Iraq and at finding an acceptable formula that will save Iraq and its people from the devastation of a new war, since Iraq has suffered enough as a result of a series of wars that have left a trail of destruction in the region in terms of human losses, damaged physical infrastructure and environmental pollution in the region. As can be seen from recent indicators, a new war in Iraq would create a new catastrophe with dire consequences, not only for Iraq itself, but also for its neighbours in the region. It might also lead to a series of accelerated changes in the geopolitical map of the whole Middle East region.

In the heavily clouded atmosphere of war, the State of Qatar has consistently sought to find the best possible way out of this ominous crisis.

As a result, and by virtue of Qatar's capacity as Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), my Government has called for an extraordinary summit meeting of the OIC member States in order to discuss the best political ways to reach a peaceful solution that will spare Iraq and its people the dangers of a new humanitarian catastrophe. The State of Qatar and the OIC have every hope that the Security Council will reach an agreement that will save the region from tension and war.

On Friday, 14 February, we listened closely to the reports submitted by Mr. Hans Blix, the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and by Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Afterwards, we also listened carefully to the contributions of the members of the Security Council and their reactions to the two reports of the international inspectors.

In our view, the two reports did not substantially differ from the inspectors' presentation on 27 January of their initial reports on the outcome of their search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. My delegation further notes that, judging by the extensive exchange of views among States Members of the United Nations, opinions in the international community, represented by the Security Council, remain divided. We also note, however, that there is overwhelming support for allowing the international inspectors more time and greater authority and to give the diplomatic efforts a better chance to achieve a peaceful solution. We also continue to insist on the importance of the need to reach a peaceful settlement of the Iraqi question.

In our turn, we call on Iraq to respond to and implement fully the Security Council's resolutions. We appreciate Iraq's response to the resolutions adopted at the Arab summit meeting, held in March 2002, regarding the situation between Iraq and Kuwait. We call on Iraq to resolve the remaining issues with Kuwait, including the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country detainees, and to return the Kuwaiti property remaining in its possession.

While we are on the subject of weapons of mass destruction and the need to respect resolutions of international legitimacy, we wish to place on record our conviction that the work of the Security Council must be transparent and must abandon selectivity and double standards. We also wish to place on record our belief that the United Nations should not offer certain countries special treatment while it insists on the implementation of international resolutions.

The resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented by Israel, which possesses an arsenal of nuclear weapons and refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We call on the international system to subject Israeli nuclear installations and nuclear power facilities to the safeguards of the IAEA.

The President: Let me repeat what I said yesterday. I would suggest that all speakers take their seven minutes fully to address the subject matter. I will say right now that I am grateful for all the kind words to me that they may have thought of, so perhaps we can refrain from addressing kind words to the presidency and save some time for the discussion of the subject matter.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Three months ago, on 8 November 2002, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1441 (2002). The adoption of that resolution was in accordance with international legality and demonstrated the importance of moving unanimously, under the Charter of the United Nations, towards the peace option and the solution of problems through the unanimity of the Security Council to that end.

That resolution is being implemented satisfactorily. On 14 February, we heard the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the inspections in Iraq. The message received by the international community affirmed the speedy success of the activities and inspections and held the promise of further such success in the near future. I wish on this occasion to express our appreciation to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their efforts in leading the inspection teams with objectivity and professionalism.

The results of their efforts were set out in two balanced reports that confirmed their determination to

pursue their tasks so that they may bear fruit in the near future. This success was demonstrated in the unity of the international community, in international legality and in the unanimity of the Security Council in adopting resolution 1441 (2002), which affirmed the effectiveness of collective action by the Council, which must be maintained.

It must be clear that Iraq's compliance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions and its ongoing responsiveness to the demands of the Council and the inspectors will lead to the speedy completion of the inspections and to an end to the dark tunnel in which it has existed for more than a decade. If we cannot emerge into the fresh air and light — the assured outcome of the commitment of all parties to the rules of international legality — that tunnel may lead us into a deep abyss.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction, the focus of our attention today, is not confined to Iraq. We must bear in mind that all tasks undertaken, voluntarily or under coercion, to disarm Iraq represent a step towards freeing the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction, as provided for in resolution 687 (1991). In addressing the situation in Iraq, members of the Security Council must never forget that the credibility of international law is not solely dependent on eliminating the proscribed Iraqi weapons, to the complete neglect of applying the same criteria to all cases. That credibility hinges on the Security Council's achieving all its objectives and priorities in that context. The disarmament of Iraq must be only the beginning of the process of removing the danger of all weapons of mass destruction from the Middle East. That will confirm the Security Council's credibility in the eyes of the peoples of the region and demonstrate its commitment to justice and equality, the bases for any proper international relations.

The Security Council is called upon today to assume its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. We must all uphold the choice of peace in settling the current crisis. We must commit ourselves to achieving this by collective political action. The unity of the Security Council is the only means of strengthening its authority and of validating its credibility. That was demonstrated in the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), which represents the approach that the Council must maintain.

Egypt wishes here to affirm the following points in dealing with the question of Iraq.

First, we must keep in mind that our objective is to achieve a peaceful settlement of this conflict.

Secondly, the inspection process must be fully supported and must continue, without interruption or rigid deadlines, so long as it can achieve positive results. It must achieve its goal of removing all weapons of mass destruction from Iraq.

Thirdly, through its resolutions, which represent an integrated whole, the Security Council is the only body entrusted by the international community to deal with the situation.

Finally, Iraq must continue to cooperate fully with the inspection teams and comply with the terms of the relevant Security Council resolutions with respect to the inspections.

The dangerous repercussions that armed conflict would have for the Middle East and the entire world make it incumbent on all members of the international community to maintain international law and to work, patiently and with determination to reach a peaceful settlement in order to achieve peace and stability and in order to be able to deal with other serious problems and crises faced by the region, such as the tragic situation in the Palestinian territories, as well as to confront the phenomenon of international terrorism, which is a danger to the entire world. We do not doubt at all that war in the region can only fuel terrorism and exacerbate its pernicious effects.

All the peoples of the world are calling for peace. Our countries are hoping that we will be able to give peace a further chance. We have called for an urgent Arab summit that would help create conditions to stop military action. As a contributor to all such forums, Egypt, the oldest country in the world — as old as history itself — appeals to the Council to continue to shoulder its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It appeals to every Member State to assume its responsibility to take collective action to achieve that objective.

War, for all its complexities and dangers, sometimes seems to be the easiest path. Peace requires concerted, continued effort and self-control, which befits States that hold the beacon of freedom. They must maintain that beacon, not by force and fire, but by wisdom and law. We will not lose hope of reaching a

peaceful settlement. We will all have to keep the beacon illuminated, because it will light our way to a stable, secure international community, which we can all build based on the edifice of the United Nations and its Charter.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica is a peace-loving country. More than half a century ago, my country totally renounced unilaterally the use of force and entrusted its security to international law and the multilateral machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The organ over which you, Sir, are presiding today, the Security Council, is the sole guarantor of stability and international security for my nation and all its inhabitants. For that reason, my country views the current crisis with Iraq with deep concern.

Over the last 10 years, my country has observed with growing alarm the repeated delays and various obstacles that the Iraqi Government has set up against the process of destruction of its weapons of mass destruction. We have repeatedly demanded that Iraq comply, first, with resolution 687 (1991) and now with resolution 1441 (2002). We have condemned Hussain's tyrannical regime for its countless violations of the fundamental rights of the population, its repeated acts of aggression directed against neighbouring nations, its use of weapons proscribed since the First World War and its outright scorn for democratic principles. The disarmament of Iraq would not only promote stability in the region but would also and above all be of tremendous benefit to the Iraqi people. The elimination of Iraq's proscribed weapons will make it possible for its people to enjoy the dividends of peace.

In this regard, Costa Rica reaffirms the overriding importance of the peaceful disarmament of Iraq pursuant to the mandate of resolutions 687 (1991) and 1441 (2002). We demand from Iraq full, immediate, unconditional and proactive cooperation with the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We require Iraq to furnish tangible and convincing proof of the complete destruction of all of its weapons of mass destruction and to account for the weapons whose whereabouts are currently unknown.

On the other hand, we are heartened by the statements of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei concerning the growing, albeit still incomplete, cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities. We would recall that although it is true that Iraq has never fully cooperated, inspections have yielded positive results. Under the mandate of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) more arms were discovered than during the Gulf war. Moreover, since last 27 November, when inspections resumed under the unanimous mandate of resolution 1441 (2002), we have seen tangible results. Given these circumstances, we must fully trust and support the inspectors. It is vital to give UNMOVIC and the IAEA sufficient time to make a last, sustained effort to verify Iraq's disarmament by means of exhaustive and intrusive inspections. We should allow the inspectors themselves to determine whether it is fruitful to continue their work or whether its effectiveness has been exhausted. For that reason, we urge the Security Council to bolster UNMOVIC by providing it with more human and technical resources so as to make it an even more vigorous and exacting verification mechanism. We are encouraged by the fact that a number of countries have already offered additional assistance in order to enhance the Commission's effectiveness. We urge all nations to provide UNMOVIC with all the information they may hold concerning programmes of proscribed weapons in Iraq.

The Security Council must always act in order to preserve the legitimacy and authority of the United Nations. For that reason it is essential to achieve the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. In that regard, we call on all members of the Security Council to explore and exhaust all existing political and diplomatic channels within this normative framework so as to secure compliance with Council resolutions by peaceful means. For the sake of the Iraqi people, we have the moral duty to exhaust all opportunities and possibilities provided by resolutions 687 (1991), 1284 (1999) and 1441 (2002) in order to achieve a peaceful solution.

Certainly, the Baghdad regime does not deserve another chance. However, the 26 million Iraqis do indeed deserve one. The Iraqi people should not be an innocent victim of the suicidal policies of the dictatorial regime that governs it.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Helg (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Faced with the Iraqi crisis, the international community is now at a crossroads. The Government of Iraq has failed to dispel the suspicion that it still possesses weapons of mass destruction — weapons that it has used in the past both against its own people and in its military operations abroad. By refusing to cooperate with the United Nations, it has inflicted enormous suffering on its own people, in particular its most vulnerable sectors.

On 8 November 2002, the Security Council gave the Iraqi regime a chance to resume its place within the international community. To that end, the Security Council demanded that the Iraqi Government cooperate fully, actively and unconditionally with the inspectors who are responsible for identifying and destroying banned weapons.

The inspectors have worked in an exemplary manner. Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei have reported to the Security Council on several occasions. The facts set out in their conclusions, however, fall short of what we expected. The inspectors have pointed out that they have been granted access to all the sites they wanted to visit without hindrance and that they are making progress with their mission. They have also highlighted the fact that they have found no irrefutable proof that Iraq is continuing to manufacture weapons of mass destruction or that it is preparing to use them. But they have deplored the lack of active cooperation. We had expected the Iraqi Government to respond with a clear sign of good will. Its ambivalent attitude has not restored confidence.

Does that mean that the moment has come to resort to the use of force? We do not believe so. Our position is based on a dispassionate analysis of the situation. We are aware of the dangers inherent in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and we do not underestimate the risk that such weapons might one day fall into the hands of international terrorist networks. We are concerned, however, that a hasty military operation might create a violent shockwave in a region where a sustainable balance based on peace and mutual confidence has not yet been established. Furthermore, we dread the potential consequences of such action for the civilian population.

Rightly concerned about the fate of the civilian population affected by the crisis in Iraq and the surrounding region, Switzerland recently held, in Geneva, a humanitarian meeting to suggest a platform for a humanitarian dialogue, to strengthen the exchange of information in that area and to highlight the humanitarian aspects of the crisis. The meeting was attended by 30 countries, including those neighbouring Iraq, and 20 humanitarian organizations, including all the main humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system, as well as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other humanitarian non-governmental organizations.

The actors involved explained what preparations they had made and what measures they had planned to respond in the event of armed conflict, inter alia. Iraq's neighbours expressed their concerns about the consequences they would face if hostilities broke out, while reminding participants of the overall dimension of the Iraq crisis and the need to share the burden fairly among States, in particular with regard to the question of refugees. The importance of ensuring respect for international humanitarian law, in particular the 1949 Geneva Conventions, was strongly reaffirmed. The discussion also covered the need to make the necessary resources available to humanitarian partners, both for planning and preparatory activities and to deal with immediate needs.

The meeting provided an opportunity to clarify the humanitarian agenda. It was agreed that humanitarian dialogue must be followed up and strengthened through a platform to address humanitarian questions concerning Iraq. If such a group is formed, it will act as a forum for the exchange of views aimed at strengthening existing coordinating mechanisms, rather than at duplicating them. Switzerland has declared its readiness to promote and to support such a group.

During that meeting, the participants agreed that an armed conflict in the region would very probably have grave consequences for the local civilian population, not only in Iraq, where the situation is already precarious, but also in neighbouring countries. Against that background, we reiterate that resorting to force should be considered only after all peaceful means to find a solution to the crisis have been exhausted.

Of course, we understand the argument of those who consider that readiness to use force is essential in order to strengthen the position of the United Nations inspectors. We appreciate that view and the efforts of

those who have expressed it. But the time to make such a decision has not yet come. There is still a chance to achieve the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) without violence and to contain the danger posed by proscribed weapons in Iraq. We can strengthen the inspection regime. The inspectors have made proposals to this effect, and we advocate giving them the additional means they require to enable them to pursue their task with the necessary efficiency and speed. The Security Council must remain determined and must persevere. If that option fails, we recall that in any case the use of force must be authorized by a Security Council resolution.

Iraq holds the key to the resolution of the crisis. Switzerland appeals to the Iraqi Government to act in the true interests of its country. The international community recognizes Iraq's inalienable right to sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is urgent that the Iraqi Government understand the message of the Security Council and that it respond in the way that is expected of it.

For its part, Switzerland will continue to work in the conviction that a negotiated solution can be found; we remain available to assist in any new effort that could contribute to the cause of peace.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Republic of Korea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): In pursuing our common goal of disarming Iraq of its programme of weapons of mass destruction, the international community now stands at a critical juncture. The discussions today and in the days ahead in the Security Council will certainly have far-reaching implications for both the future of the United Nations and the peace and stability of the world.

The Republic of Korea has fully supported, and continues to support, Security Council resolutions on Iraq, including resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution was clear and unequivocal in demanding that Iraq implement all of its international obligations for disarmament under the relevant Council resolutions in a prompt and verifiable manner.

My delegation greatly values the professionalism and effectiveness with which United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been conducting weapons inspections in Iraq over the past 11 weeks, based on their strengthened mandate under resolution 1441 (2002). We note from Mr. Blix's report last week that although Iraq's cooperation on process, such as granting prompt access to sites, has so far been without problems, its cooperation on substance has not been enough to resolve existing questions of disarmament. It is disturbing to note that many proscribed weapons and other items still remain unaccounted for and that Iraq has been importing large quantities of missile engines for use in a proscribed missile system, in contravention of resolution 687 (1991).

Judging from the findings of the inspection teams as reported by UNMOVIC Executive Chairman Blix and IAEA Director General ElBaradei last Friday, it is clear that Iraq is not yet in full compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002).

Given Iraq's dismal track record of failing to comply with 17 Security Council resolutions over the past 12 years, it is incumbent on Iraq to meet the two key tests of resolution 1441 (2002): a full, accurate and complete declaration; and full, voluntary, unconditional and active cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We believe that Iraq knows best what is required if it is to meet those tests. In the event that Iraq fails in those critical tests, it should be responsible for the consequences of such a failure.

We also note from the UNMOVIC Executive Chairman's report that the period of disarmament through inspection could still be short if there is immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with UNMOVIC and the IAEA. We strongly urge Iraq to cooperate fully to ensure complete and verifiable disarmament and thus spare the Iraqi people the untold suffering that will result from non-compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Finally, the Republic of Korea reiterates its commitment to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction constitutes a threat to international peace and security. We hope that the Security Council, as the central organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, will act in a unified manner in ensuring immediate compliance by Iraq with its resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Djumala (Indonesia): From the briefings by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, it is the impression of my delegation that the current situation — where the world seems perched on the thin edge of war — is not hopeless, and that the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) can still be met.

According to Mr. Blix's report, more than 400 inspections, covering 300 sites, have already been carried out. They were all carried out without notice to the Iraqis, but still, access was nearly always promptly provided. This is an indication that the Government of Iraq has been cooperative so far, and is a good basis on which to build both expectations and the actual work for the rest of the exercise. It is to be noted that Mr. Blix also said in his briefing on Friday that there had been no convincing evidence so far that the Iraqi side knew in advance that inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) were going to a particular site. The UNMOVIC Executive Chairman observed that the inspectors had not yet found any weapons of mass destruction or related proscribed items or programmes, and that they had only discovered a small number of empty chemical munitions that should have been declared by Iraq.

Similarly, Mr. ElBaradei reported on Friday that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had so far completed a total of 177 inspections, at 125 locations. During the process, Iraq also provided immediate access to all locations. The Agency has found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in the country.

In the view of my delegation, there is nothing in the reports of UNMOVIC and the IAEA to which I have just alluded that concludes that Iraq is, or is not, in violation of resolution 1441 (2002). Both reports, however, are clear that the work of inspections is continuing according to plan, and that those inspections are enjoying cooperation provided by Iraq. At this point, that is as much as can be expected.

It seems quite clear that resolution 1441 (2002) is a finely structured document. It provides a description of the disarmament scenario for Iraq and clearly outlines the consequences of default or violations. Between that scenario and the visiting of those consequences on Iraq, the inspections authorized by the Council have a critical role to play. It is only right that, in formulating the next step, the inspectors and the results of their inspections be taken into account. To authorize war without that condition being fulfilled would amount to preconceived warfare, and would seriously undermine the credibility of the Council.

The problem is possibly with the pace of the inspections. To that end, we share the views of those who feel that strengthening the inspections regime — including hastening the pace of the inspections — must be undertaken as a matter of urgency. What is required, then, is to allocate greater resources of time, manpower and equipment to the inspections, in line with the scenario outlined in resolution 1441 (2002).

In our view, that approach would strengthen United Nations inspections by maintaining the inspections regime on Iraq and enabling more to be achieved quickly, with no dilution in the quality or thoroughness of the work. That would further enhance the credibility of the process and would give all sides confidence that that process is fair and effective.

My delegation acknowledges the cooperation provided so far to United Nations inspectors by the Government of Iraq, and hopes that such cooperation will be extended fully and unwaveringly in order to demonstrate not only that Iraq is complying with the terms of resolution 1441 (2002), but that it also in fact wishes to be seen to be in compliance.

Having said that, my delegation is of the opinion that diplomacy has not been exhausted in this matter and that war is not imminent. We call for the unity of the Security Council on this sensitive matter, as this is the time to close ranks, not break them. Obviously, this is a trying time for the Council, whose authority is at stake on this issue. Its members must work in unity in order to protect that authority. Such cooperation is also imperative so as to enable important decisions regarding this agenda item to be taken within the Council — and at the appropriate time, as it should be. In view of the complexity of the moment, this calls not for the throwing up of hands, but for harder work, wisdom and consultation by the Council in maximizing the use of all diplomatic means with a view to reaching a peaceful and durable solution to this question.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

Mr. Zainuddin (Malaysia): May I join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his excellent stewardship of the Council last month.

My delegation also wishes to thank you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Council for convening this open meeting on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, again in response to the request of the Permanent Representative of South Africa in his capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement. The decision of the Council to convene this open debate to enable the larger membership of the Organization to express its views — particularly on an issue as important as this — is commendable. We are here today to voice our concerns regarding the possibility that the Security Council is now being asked to consider proposals that open up the prospect of war against a sovereign State Member of the Organization.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement made yesterday by South Africa outlining the position of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the head of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Hans Blix, and the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for their utmost professionalism in the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). We welcome their comprehensive reports to the Security Council on 27 January and 14 February this year. In essence, both recognized that inspections have yielded positive results and emphasized the need for inspectors to continue their work. My delegation favours the continuation of inspections as advocated by most members of the Council and by other speakers in this debate. We fully support the proposal made by France with regard to the need to increase the human and technical capacities of the inspection teams in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002). We also support the intention to request another meeting of the Security Council at the ministerial level, on 14 March, to appraise the situation and the progress made with regard to the implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

At the same time, the disarmament efforts must be a part of a clear sanctions-lifting plan, so that the debilitating humanitarian crisis in Iraq can be brought to an immediate end. The success of the current exercise requires the fullest cooperation by the Government of Iraq in every respect. My delegation welcomes the recent decision by the Government of Iraq to issue a presidential decree containing prohibitions with regard to the importation and production of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. We also welcome Iraq's recent acceptance of reconnaissance flights by United States U-2, French Mirage and Russian Antonov aircraft to facilitate the work of the inspectors.

Iraq must continue to cooperate with the inspectors and refrain from giving any pretext to warmongers. It is time to bring to a close a sad chapter in the history of the region and forge a new relationship among the regional States based on reconciliation, trust and confidence with one another and a shared common heritage. This, however, could only come about with Iraq's full cooperation in other areas, under the relevant Security Council resolutions, including an immediate accounting for and return of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing third-country nationals, as well as the national archives of that country.

Only these actions on the part of Iraq would ensure the return of normalcy in relations between Iraq and Kuwait. Therefore, we would urge Iraq not to miss this window of opportunity and to do what is right, in the interest of peace and tranquillity for its people, the region and the world.

Malaysia, like many peace-loving nations, strongly opposes the use of force against Iraq, for the following reasons.

First, we are convinced that the Iraqi crisis can be solved through peaceful means. My delegation continues firmly to believe that inspections can work and that all avenues should be explored to find a peaceful solution within the framework of the United Nations. The Security Council must continue to encourage diplomacy to resolve the problem through effective inspections and weapons destruction, as envisaged in resolution 1441 (2002), and not to legitimize war against Iraq to effect regime change. It is our earnest hope that Council members will preserve the integrity of the Council's decision-making process and do their utmost to resolve the problem without recourse to military action.

Secondly, resorting to the use of force is most likely to undermine international peace and security, rather than to maintain or restore it. It would undoubtedly give rise to the potential for an increasing cycle of violence and further aggravate worldwide terrorism, resulting in a more volatile world order. Therefore, it must be avoided at all costs, as it is unjustified and counter-productive.

Thirdly, a war on Iraq would have catastrophic consequences for its population. Bringing the war to Baghdad would inflict more suffering on the Iraqi people, which has already been suffering enormously since the imposition of economic sanctions in 1991. It would have devastating effects on the country's 13 million children, many of whom are already malnourished. Thousands of innocent people and civilians would be killed, and more would be displaced. The price that the Iraqi people would have to pay is unacceptable, especially when clear alternatives to war exist.

Lastly, there is no precedent in international law for the use of force as a preventive measure when there has been no actual or imminent attack by the offending State. Unlike the situation in 1991, there has been no indication by Iraq that it intends to attack another country and no evidence of military preparations for such attack. As may be recalled, the Security Council has never authorized the use of force on the basis of a potential threat of violence. All past authorizations have been in response to actual invasions. An attack against Iraq without any credible evidence provided to the international community of the imminent threat it poses is, therefore, illegal and unjustified. The credibility of this Council as custodian in the maintenance of international peace and security will be at stake if it decides to take the path of destructive war instead of that of constructive diplomacy.

The massive antiwar rallies held over the last few days around the world are clear testimony that the international community does not wish to see or support military action against Iraq. Many believe that there is still an alternative to war, and the use of force could only be a last resort. For the sake of humanity and the lives of innocent Iraqis, war must be avoided. Diplomacy must be given every chance to work. Its success far outweighs anything that military action could bring to bear on the situation.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate that the Security Council, in dealing with the Iraqi crisis and other issues of peace and security, has a vital responsibility to ensure that the international system, based on the corpus of international law and norms, will be preserved and strengthened. It is our fervent hope that members of the Council will take a decision that will serve the larger interests of the international community and not just their narrow national interests. As custodians of the Charter, we are reminded that the United Nations was founded with the explicit determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". We trust that the Council, on behalf of the international community, will do what is right to maintain peace in accordance with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and international law.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): The drums of war are getting louder. Threats and warnings have become deafening. The omens of terrifying conflagration and mass destruction are thickening on the horizon. We are standing at the threshold of overwhelming disaster despite all the good intentions and genuine efforts made by peace-loving States and peoples. These States and peoples are seeking a peaceful solution to the Iraqi issue, seeking to dispel the clouds of war and spare Iraq and its brotherly people, as well as the region, this scourge that could have many unpredictable consequences.

We listened very carefully to the reports of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, and we earlier followed their various statements. These all bolster the possibility of a peaceful solution and stress the need to give the international inspection teams the necessary time to complete their mission and achieve the results that were foreseen in Security Council resolutions, the latest being resolution 1441 (2002).

War is a serious matter. If it solves one problem, it may bring many others, with destructive consequences. Whatever the basic reason for war, the results would be disastrous at all levels — humanitarian, economic, political, legal and moral. The reason for justifying a war against Iraq must be the most consistent reason for preventing war, through increasing and intensifying inspections and continuing political efforts and diplomatic contacts, while

stressing that Iraqi authorities must actively cooperate with the international inspectors. This can be done by demanding that Iraq take measures and provide information for the inspectors to complete their mission, resolve the problem of missing persons and Kuwaiti prisoners, as well as third country nationals detained in Iraq, and return all Kuwaiti property, in accordance with international legality. This should be done so that the Iraqi question can be resolved comprehensively in all its aspects.

The possibility that there are weapons of mass destruction in Iraq is the best reason for the international inspectors to complete their task in order that any such weapons can be destroyed and their use prevented in any military confrontation, which would have grave humanitarian and environmental results

The Security Council today faces a major test in the way it discharges its responsibilities for maintaining international peace and security. Since the Council acts on behalf of all United Nations Members, it represents the entire international community. Therefore, the Council cannot take lightly international objections to war on Iraq as long as the possibility exists to achieve the requirements of international legitimacy by peaceful means. It is more important and urgent for the Council to seek peaceful solutions in order to act for international stability. That cannot be accomplished except by maintaining the security, stability and territorial integrity of all countries, including Iraq.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to spare Iraq and the region war and its destructive consequences. We call for a solution to the question of Iraq through the United Nations. The solution must be to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions while maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and avoiding its fragmentation under all circumstances.

Insisting on the open use of force would weaken the credibility of the United Nations. It would create doubts about the fairness and strength of international law. It would send human society back into dangerous chaos at a time when the means of force and destruction are available to all. The use of such force has become possible in the absence of a central authority for the international community and through disrespect for international law.

Even if all means available to implement the resolution are exhausted and the principle of war is accepted, the extent of military action must be limited. Its objective must not be to punish the brotherly people of Iraq, who have suffered for a very long time, through two devastating wars. Only God knows what a third war would lead to.

We support all efforts to destroy weapons of mass destruction, whether in Iraq or in any other State. The call for disarmament of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq must be accompanied by a call to destroy all weapons of mass destruction in Israel, which is the only country in the Middle East to stockpile nuclear and proscribed weapons. It is the only State in the region that refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It is the only State in the region that refuses to submit its nuclear installations to international supervision.

Israel's advocates justify that situation, saying that Israel has never used nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. That argument is to be rejected because Israel does in fact carry out mass destruction in the occupied Palestinian territories by killing people, razing homes, destroying the economic infrastructure, imposing a suffocating economic embargo, sabotaging farms, bulldozing fields, uprooting trees, assassinating Palestinian political activists, restricting the freedom of movement of Palestinians by closing checkpoints, expanding settlements and flouting the human rights of the Palestinian people under international humanitarian laws and norms.

Israel has been able to use such excessive force while it holds the most lethal and destructive weapons, thanks to the unlimited assistance which is provided to it and denied to others. Israel does not need to use weapons of mass destruction, but it does threaten the States and peoples of the region with such weapons. The issue is not the kind of weapon used; the issue is the results of a policy of premeditated and programmed destruction aimed at annihilating the Palestinian cause, at sowing despair in the hearts of Palestinians and at intimidating Arabs and Muslims.

It has been said that one of the objectives of the war against Iraq is to fight terrorism. The fight against terrorism cannot ignore terror's main roots in the region: the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands since 1967. Violence and extremism in the region are not a reason to give up the search for a solution to the question of Palestine; it is precisely because this issue has not been resolved justly and fairly, in

accordance with international legitimacy and the principle of land for peace, that the current situation exists.

Double standards are one cause of the extremism and violence in the region. They cause hatred and division among States. Injustice breeds extremism, and oppression leads to explosion. The worst oppression is indignity and the desecration of beliefs and all that is holy. Colonialism is the worst form of injustice. No matter how long and dark the night of injustice is, it will be followed by the dawn of freedom. The sun of freedom will shine; dawn is near.

Peace and security are an indivisible whole. Abiding by international legitimacy is the responsibility of all. No exceptions can be admitted, whatever pretext is used, whatever fait accompli is presented. What we seek and look forward to the principle of "right is might" and not of "might is right".

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): For years now, the Government of Iraq has had a heavy outstanding debt vis-à-vis the international community. That debt must be paid without delay and without concessions. The Council has sent clear signals to Saddam Hussain's regime that the time for patience and tolerance has ended. We are now in another phase. If Iraq wishes to avoid being the object of grave measures of force, it must convincingly prove that it does not possess weapons of mass destruction. Or, if it does, it must destroy them immediately under the direction and supervision of the United Nations.

Uruguay believes that at this juncture and in the current circumstances, before resorting to extreme measures of force, we must travel along all the paths that still remain in order to achieve the objective of disarming Iraq without the bloody cost of war. Above all, it is essential to exhaust all the means and measures that the Security Council has provided for in its numerous resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002), means and measures that, as has been repeatedly stated here, have not yet been sufficiently employed.

Last week, Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei informed us that the inspections, which resumed barely 11 weeks ago, have already yielded positive though not totally satisfactory results. We should continue on this course and give the inspectors more time to complete a task that we knew from the outset would be extremely complex and would require new actions.

We must exhaust all available resources before exposing the world to the most devastating of human experiences: war. It has often been noted in the Council Chamber that Iraq has engaged in deceit and concealment, mocking the rest of the world over a long period of 12 years. That is true. There have been 12 years of tolerance, which can no longer be protracted without justification. But neither can we abandon the excess of tolerance of the past without first awaiting the results of international action now under way. To do so might lead us even against our will to adopt decisions with grave and irreversible consequences. War would undoubtedly cause death and destruction, which is precisely what the international community must prevent in disarming Iraq.

Uruguay, like other States, believes that the inspections should continue and should be decisively strengthened and broadened in order to extricate Iraq from the situation in which it has put itself: a State in breach of United Nations resolutions. However, the prolongation of those procedures should not in any way be interpreted as a definitive renunciation of the use of force or as an increased flexibility in the Council's position. Much less should it be taken as a sign of solidarity with the dictatorial Government of Saddam Hussain. The Government of Iraq should hear this clear and unequivocal message.

When we stress that force should be used as a last resort in an extreme case and in accordance with international law and the principles and rules of the Charter of the United Nations, we are reaffirming our commitment to a peaceful and effective solution to this difficult situation.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Nigeria, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ndekhedehe (Nigeria): Mr. President, on behalf of the Nigerian delegation, I wish to thank you, and, through you, the other members of the Security Council, for having convened this meeting on Iraq. This meeting, like previous ones, affords Member States the opportunity to express their views on the important issue of finding a peaceful solution to the Iraqi issue.

The issue of the disarmament of Iraq has been on the agenda of the Security Council for about 12 years, since the adoption of resolution 687 (1991). It is the view of the Nigerian delegation that, as protracted as the process appears to be, the Security Council should be commended for the able manner in which it has handled the issue. In its painstaking efforts to find a peaceful solution to the issue of disarming Iraq, the Council came up with a robust inspection regime, encapsulated in resolution 1441 (2002). The collective will of the peace-loving States Members of the United Nations was expressed through the collective wisdom of the Security Council in that unanimously adopted resolution. It is for this reason that the Nigerian delegation has implicit hope in the ability of the Security Council, acting on behalf of the United Nations Member States, to resolve amicably the Iraqi situation and any other situations that may pose a threat to international peace and security.

It will be recalled that the inspection regime in Iraq under resolution 1441 (2002) was established only in November 2002, barely three months ago. Consequently, the weapons inspectors have not been working in Iraq for too long. From all accounts, the inspection teams have done wonderful work within the relatively short period of time available to them. Accordingly, it is the view of the Nigerian delegation that the United Nations inspectors in Iraq should be given time to maximize their efforts and reach the optimum level of achievement of their goal.

It is not in doubt that the robust inspection regime established under resolution 1441 (2002) is aimed expressly and unequivocally at disarming Iraq peacefully of all chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Consequently, we need to exercise patience, and, indeed, to exercise that patience with tenacity, as patience is a key ingredient for peace. In this regard, we need to remind ourselves that the United Nations was established to, among other things, ensure the maintenance of international peace and security — "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". It is therefore imperative that every effort should be made to avoid the use of force. However, where the use of force becomes inescapable in order to enforce resolutions of the Security Council and ensure its credibility, such enforcement action should be the result of the collective will and decisions of the Security Council, under Article 42 of the Charter.

The first preambular paragraph of the Charter of the United Nations opens with the words "We the peoples of the United Nations". This refers unmistakably to the various peoples of the world whose countries are Members of the United Nations. It is clear from the sheer number of the various concerned peoples of the world who took part in peaceful demonstrations before and during the weekend — particularly on Saturday, 15 February 2003 — that the peoples of the world want the Iraqi issue to be resolved peacefully. Accordingly, since the United Nations is the people's parliament, so to speak, the voices of the peoples of the world, which are clearly against the use of force, should be listened to and respected.

Consequently, Nigeria calls on Iraq to comply with its obligations under the various United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), and to cooperate with the United Nations inspection teams, so that the issue can be resolved peacefully. This will facilitate the lifting of restrictions, which will bring relief to the Iraqi people, especially women, the elderly and children. Nigeria therefore urges all concerned to make sustained efforts to avoid the use of force while ensuring the effective implementation of resolution 1441 (2002).

In conclusion, it is pertinent to state that, like the menace of international terrorism, the issue of ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction is a global responsibility which can best be resolved collectively under the auspices of the Security Council. Accordingly, while Nigeria, like all other peace-loving nations, acknowledges the urgent need for the eradication of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, we believe that this should be done collectively, in a truly multilateral manner, under the auspices of the Security Council, which has the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, and to express our thanks and appreciation to you for having convened this important meeting on Iraq.

At this meeting we are discussing an extremely serious issue that poses a threat to peace and security in the Middle East and internationally, through the huge

massing of troops and all kinds of military hardware and the unprecedented preparations that are under way with the goal of waging war against Iraq. Such a war would have dire consequences for the Iraqi population, which has suffered for so long as a result of the sanctions. It would pose a threat not only to the unity, territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Iraq, but also to the entire region, with unforeseeable consequences.

My country strongly opposes any attack against Iraq that has no reason or justification, especially given that Iraq has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, as indicated in the briefings of Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei recently, on Friday, 14 February. Those briefings made clear that Iraq is implementing resolution 1441 (2002) and that the inspection process is moving forward satisfactorily. No proof has been shown of the presence or development of weapons of mass destruction since 1991. In response to international demands, Iraq is cooperating seriously and is determined to abandon proscribed weapons, as it emphasized recently by taking a series of measures. For instance, it has enacted effective legislation and formed committees to that effect.

The inspection process must run its full course in order to fulfil its mandate, especially since inspections are proceeding smoothly and effectively. That was made clear by Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. ElBaradei here in this Chamber. This is also the wish of the members of the international community, as demonstrated clearly in the discussions that have taken place during Council meetings and by the large number of participants in this debate. The views expressed that war or the threat of it should be averted and all peaceful means supported, and the massive public rallies and demonstrations in many countries of the world, including in the United Kingdom and the United States, by millions of people of various nationalities — all this is proof of the fact that the world favours a peaceful solution to this crisis through international legitimacy.

The haste shown by some Powers to rush to war and use force, with the potential for destruction in the region; to renounce the logic of reason and wisdom that would give a chance to the inspections process to remove weapons of mass destruction peacefully; and to attempt to create flimsy pretexts for war without any concrete evidence, employing intensive information campaigns to justify a war against Iraq: all this raises serious questions in the minds of all prudent and fair-minded people concerning the real invisible agenda behind a war against Iraq and that country's occupation.

This way of dealing with the Iraqi crisis reveals total bias and double standards in addressing issues of the Arab region. While the resolutions adopted by the Security Council concerning Iraq are to be implemented in the light of the repeated charge that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction and that it poses a threat to international peace and security, we see the Council turning a blind eye to its resolutions against Israel. Israel is not subjecting its nuclear facilities or ballistic missiles to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system, although it possesses a nuclear weapons arsenal and it refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Even worse, the Security Council has done little with regard to Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the use of the most advanced weaponry, such as aircraft, missiles and tanks, against an unarmed population that lacks even the basic needs of life. Those practices include the random killing of women, children and the elderly, the destruction of homes, the displacement of entire families, collective detention and the continued policy of siege and starvation directed against the Palestinian people. As all of that is happening, the international community remains silent, failing to put an end to these horrendous crimes, which are unprecedented in modern history. At the same time, the Security Council is unable to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security owing to attempts to hinder the adoption or implementation of resolutions that would end the conflict and would bring about peace and the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The sense of injustice and frustration, the unfair treatment of issues and the double standards, especially with regard to the Middle East and the wider Arab region, will not only lead to more violence and instability there, but will also affect other regions. The world is not what it was yesterday; it has become a small village. Interests have become intertwined, and the crisis will have spillover effects around the world. That requires that we fulfil our responsibilities to our peoples and to history in order to put an end to international crisis flashpoints, particularly the

Palestinian crisis, by enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate rights and to establish a Palestinian State on their national soil, like all other nations, at a time when the crime of occupation has become a stigma for humanity and for those who claim to be civilized.

We hope that the Powers that are beating the drums of war will respond to the calls of their peoples, as demonstrated in massive demonstrations in many of the world's cities, and to the appeals made by the international community in this forum, and that wisdom will be our guide as we deal with the Iraqi crisis, renouncing the policy of using or threatening to use force. The inspections process must be given adequate time, and this issue must be addressed in the context of international legitimacy, through the United Nations and through Security Council resolutions, by beginning the lifting of the sanctions against Iraq, which have lasted for 12 years, and by implementing paragraph 14 of resolution 687 (1991) to make the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including those of Israel.

Once again, we call for the voice of reason to prevail and for the inspections process to be given enough time to address this issue within the framework of the international community in a way that preserves Iraq's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty and that saves the region and the concerned parties from a war that would claim the lives of many innocent people. All possible avenues for a peaceful resolution of this crisis must be explored.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ecuador, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Yépez Lasso (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador is a peace-loving country that bases its foreign policy on the strictest compliance with the principles and norms of international public law, which are clearly and precisely articulated in the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, my country firmly defends the binding nature of the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and the proscription of the use of force in international relations, except in cases envisaged in the San Francisco Charter itself. Ecuador has always supported the Security Council's jurisdiction over the maintenance of international peace and security. All of its resolutions must be respected by the parties, and it is incumbent upon the Council to ensure their full implementation.

Therefore, Ecuador urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate fully in the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). In that context, the United Nations inspectors should continue their work until they complete the process aimed at the peaceful, transparent and verifiable disarmament of Iraq, and should submit the relevant reports for the Council's consideration and for its decision.

The situation concerning Iraq must be addressed in conformity with the norms of international law, primarily those contained in Chapter VII of the Charter. Only the Security Council — when the facts and circumstances so require — will thus be able to determine whether or not there are grounds to use force through an explicit resolution that would set forth the conditions for the use of force, if appropriate.

Ecuador believes in peace and in law. The international legal order established after the Second World War is being tested. My country urges that it remain fully in force and that multilateral cooperation be strengthened in order to build a more secure and just world in greater solidarity.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Thailand, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kasemsarn (Thailand): Three months ago, we welcomed the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) and Iraq's agreement to abide by its international obligations on the basis of that and other relevant Council resolutions. We witnessed with great anticipation the resumption of inspections in Iraq. On 27 January this year, we were pleased to hear the reports given by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei on the progress of the inspections. We noted that their reports underlined the need for more time and information so that the inspectors might accomplish their tasks.

Subsequently, on 5 February, the Council benefited from the presentation by the United States Secretary of State, which helped the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to undertake more focused inspections in fulfilment of their mandates. And, just last Friday, we received yet another report from the two chief

inspectors on the latest progress of inspections in Iraq, where cooperation had been provided in certain areas, but where immediate, active and unconditional cooperation still needed to be forthcoming. In this connection, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to UNMOVIC and IAEA for their difficult tasks.

The mechanisms put in place by resolution 1441 (2002) and the progress made to date therefore clearly serve to enhance the sanctity and credibility of the multilateral framework and particularly the United Nations system. Thailand thus applauds all the efforts undertaken by all relevant parties to employ effectively the United Nations framework in order to resolve in a peaceful manner this threat to international peace and security. We continue to remain hopeful that the centrality of the United Nations in the search for a peaceful resolution on this issue will continue as events unfold.

Resolution 1441 (2002) provides the framework for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. We therefore renew our plea to Iraq to immediately and unconditionally provide complete and proactive cooperation to UNMOVIC and IAEA. Iraq must demonstrate to the world that it is faithfully and completely fulfilling its international obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant Council resolutions.

Military conflict will have consequences far beyond the region. The inevitable disruptions to the global economy will adversely affect the efforts of many countries to recover from the financial crises and recession, but of equal importance is the impact of the military conflict on the people of Iraq. The Secretary-General's recent initiative to promote discussion with the Security Council on contingency planning to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq in the event of armed conflict correctly brings into focus the devastating humanitarian and economic consequences of war. In any scenario, innocent people in Iraq, particularly women and children, will be among the first to suffer following an outbreak of armed conflict. It is therefore incumbent upon Iraq to be completely forthcoming with regard to immediate, active and unconditional cooperation with the United Nations inspectors in order to avoid even greater suffering and hardship for the Iraqi people.

The steps that the Security Council should decide to take will have an important bearing on the international community's perception of the United Nations and its role in maintaining international peace and security. In this regard, we must bear in mind that the General Assembly has just recently resumed its consideration of a draft resolution on the prevention of armed conflict. As a Member of the United Nations, Thailand will support whatever course of action the Security Council decides to take on this issue. This is our obligation under the United Nations Charter, but we hope that, in deliberating its future course of action, the Security Council will take into account the interests and concerns expressed by the wider United Nations membership and the calls to take the road of peace by pressing forward on peaceful disarmament and resolving all outstanding issues and all threats to international peace and security in a peaceful manner.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Liechtenstein, on whom I now call.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): The solution to the question before the Council today will constitute a defining moment for the United Nations. Since the Council acts, in accordance with the Charter, on behalf of all Member States, such action must be based on a solid knowledge of the views of the membership as a whole. We therefore welcome the continued willingness of the Council to hold an open debate on this issue.

Some three months after the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), there are clearly diverging views on how to proceed with regard to the implementation of that resolution. Nevertheless, there is also broad agreement on several key questions. No matter what the position may be on the desirability or necessity of military action, there is a strong consensus that the role of the United Nations in the maintenance of peace and security is at stake.

It has been said that only military action can make it clear that the Council is willing to enforce, if necessary, the implementation of its resolutions and that inaction will render the Council an irrelevant body and marginal player in the international arena. There is, of course, another way of viewing the credibility of the United Nations, a view which we would advocate. This is an Organization of peace, a body that was created to find peaceful solutions to conflict situations which would otherwise, in the absence of the United Nations,

most likely lead to an armed conflict. This is what makes the essence of the United Nations, and this constitutes the basis of its credibility and thus of its relevance. The United Nations is unique in that it provides legitimacy under international law. This is the standing it must maintain and this is why it must ponder its decisions carefully.

The Charter imposes the obligation on the Council to exhaust all non-violent means of conflict resolution before authorizing the use of force and the Council must live up to this obligation in connection with the present situation. We also recall in this context that all resolutions of the Council, regardless of their status under Chapter VI or Chapter VII of the Charter, are legally binding and that non-implementation in all cases undermines the role of the Organization, especially when it is mainly due to a lack of political will and the absence of political pressure.

The other issue where broad agreement continues to exist is the need for unanimity. The Security Council as a whole has supported resolution 1441 (2002). This was a crucial element in providing the inspections regime under the auspices of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with the essential role it is playing today. Unanimity is therefore also needed for any future action the Council might consider.

The debate we witnessed last Friday made it clear that such unanimity does not exist at this particular moment. We share the view that the use of force would need to be authorized by the Council in a separate resolution. Furthermore, we believe that the reports submitted by UNMOVIC and IAEA do not allow for the conclusion that such a decision is warranted or, indeed, justified at this time. While the decision-making power lies obviously with the Council, its decisions must nevertheless be based on the findings of the inspections regime it has established unanimously.

There is also agreement that UNMOVIC and IAEA are doing a fine job in carrying out the tasks entrusted to them under the terms of resolution 1441 (2002). At this juncture, I would like to express the gratitude of my Government to Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for the highly professional way in which they have shouldered the heavy responsibility given to them. There has been no criticism of the way in which the inspectors carry out their mandate, only criticism of the nature of cooperation extended by Iraq. This criticism, again, is shared in all quarters, while the Council has recently also listened to the reports of improvements in cooperation. The debate is thus sometimes narrowed down to the question of whether or not cooperation by Iraq will ever reach a level that is fully satisfactory for the full implementation of resolution 1441 (2002). However, a question of such magnitude must not be limited to a controversy of beliefs. We should rather ask ourselves whether we can afford not to keep insisting on full and active cooperation through political pressure and the threat of serious consequences, short of armed intervention, in a situation where there is still room for the successful completion of the work of the inspectors.

The Council must not limit itself to the sole question of whether or not it faces a situation of material breach in the terms of resolution 1441 (2002). It also has an obligation, in considering the option of armed intervention, to look at the consequences of such action. Unpredictable as some of them may be, they are certainly immense for the civilian population, for regional stability and for this Organization. We are therefore of the view that an in-depth humanitarian assessment and an outline of the role of this Organization in a possible post-conflict situation must be essential elements in any future deliberations.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Kerim (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): As we review the recent developments regarding the situation in Iraq, the Security Council is confronted with an issue that requires effective action that is in full compliance with the principles of the Charter. This issue is not important only for the maintenance of international peace and security, but also for preserving the unity of the Security Council and of the international anti-terrorist coalition. That is why the United Nations and the Security Council must play a crucial role in this crisis. Only a united Council could credibly adopt the appropriate decisions for achieving the objective of the disarmament of the Iraqi regime.

It is very important to note that the debate we are having within the United Nations, in the Security Council and elsewhere, does not mean that we disagree on the purpose of full and unconditional compliance by

Iraq with resolution 1441 (2002), including the provision that Iraq should face serious consequences if continues with violations of its obligations. The latest developments in this regard demonstrate the seriousness of this crisis, which must be approached comprehensively. At the same time, the Security Council must act swiftly and decisively. We pledge our full support to the Council in discharging its responsibility to achieve the objective of the full and effective disarmament of Iraq in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1441 (2002).

In a very short period of time we have been provided with new information and evidence that shed more light on the question of disarmament of the Iraqi regime. The Council had two briefings by the chief inspectors. Although they noted some progress, the prevailing attitude of the Iraqi regime of delaying and obstructing the inspections in substance revealed an intention not to cooperate fully and has given yet another warning about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The Security Council is asking not for progress, but Iraq's full and unconditional compliance with resolution 1441 (2002). In addition, on 5 February, the United States presented compelling evidence to the Security Council, detailing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes, its active efforts to deceive United Nations inspectors and its links to international terrorism.

The position of the Republic of Macedonia in this regard is very clear and transparent. My country understands the dangers posed by tyranny and the special responsibility of democracies to defend our shared values. The international community must stand together to face the threat posed by the nexus of terrorism and dictators with weapons of mass destruction. Saddam Hussain's regime must not be allowed to posses any weapons of mass destruction, and must disarm completely. We have supported international efforts to achieve the peaceful disarmament of Iraq. However, it has now become clear that Iraq is in material breach of Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), passed unanimously on 8 November 2002.

Iraq must immediately, actively and fully cooperate with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and comply unconditionally with the requirements of the relevant resolutions. Maintaining pressure on Iraq has proved to be the only mechanism capable of bringing about certain changes in the behaviour of Saddam's regime and respect for the decisions of the Council. While we are fully dedicated to the objective of this crisis being solved through peaceful means — until all such possibilities are exhausted — we firmly believe that the threat of force must be maintained.

The inspection process has produced valuable results to date; its activities might need to be continued, strengthened and expanded in order to carry out resolution 1441 (2002). However, the seriousness of the situation requires immediate and unconditional responses from the Iraqi regime to the inspectors, and time is running out. In other words, the situation requires a change in Iraq's attitude towards disarming, given that it has already been found guilty of material breaches of its obligations concerning 16 previous resolutions stretching back over the past 12 years.

We call upon the Security Council once again to take the necessary and appropriate action in response to Iraq's continuing threat to international peace and security. The Republic of Macedonia will continue its active contribution to the international coalition against terrorism. Saddam Hussain's regime should disarm, as requested by the United Nations, or face the consequences. In that context, my country will support action by the international community against this common danger.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Singapore.

Mr. Tan (Singapore): The world's attention is focused on the issue of Iraq. The development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction pose a grave threat to international peace and security. The threat of military action against Iraq draws nearer each day, and with it the potential for far-reaching humanitarian consequences.

During Singapore's term on the Security Council, we consistently took the position that the Iraqi authorities must comply with all Security Council resolutions. This is an important point of principle. International law must be observed. We supported the consensus in the Security Council on resolution 1441 (2002) in the hope that international law and order would be preserved. The unanimous adoption of resolution 1441 (2002) by the Security Council sent a clear message to Iraq to comply with its disarmament

obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions or face the consequences. On critical element of those resolutions is the full disarmament of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

From the regular update the Security Council has received from the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it is clear that some progress has been made in the inspections, particularly in terms of cooperation on process and procedure. That is a positive sign. But at this stage, it is also clear that "some progress" is not enough. Based on the most recent updates delivered last Friday by Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, it has become more urgent and imperative for Iraq to demonstrate without delay that it is complying fully with resolution 1441 (2002) and that it is extending its full and active cooperation to the United Nations weapons inspectors.

We stand at a crossroads on this issue. If the Government of Iraq refuses to meet its disarmament obligations, it will in all likelihood lead to an outcome that we would all prefer to avoid. We therefore urge Iraq to do all that is necessary to fully comply with resolution 1441 (2002), including ridding itself of all its weapons of mass destruction. Otherwise, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his address at the College of William and Mary on 8 February 2003,

> "the Council will have to make [a] grim choice, based on the findings of the inspectors — a choice more complex, and perhaps more fateful, than the one that faced it in 1990. And when that time comes, the Council must face up to its responsibilities". (*Press release SG/SM/8600*)

But also, we must not lose sight of the human dimension of the Iraq issue. Singapore attaches great importance to improving the humanitarian situation of the people of Iraq. They have already suffered greatly over the past decade as a result of the Iraqi Government's non-compliance with Council resolutions, which attracted Security Council sanctions. We urge the Iraqi Government to make the right decision.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Fiji, on whom I now call.

Mr. Yauvoli (Fiji): Fiji fully supports the Security Council's continued leadership on this subject. The issue of Iraq is neither a unilateral nor a bilateral question. Clearly, the effect of a war on Iraq will be felt globally, not only by the parties in conflict. While we commend the preparation by the United Nations of contingency plans in anticipation of war in Iraq, we remain confident that the international community will continue to take the lead and closely monitor the Iraqi situation so as to avert war. In that connection, we must be guided firmly, more by preventive diplomacy and less by a belligerent approach to conflict resolution. On that basis, Fiji pleads in favour of the multilateral approach that the Council is taking in the maintenance of peace and in conflict resolution.

The mandate of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), as set out in resolution 1441 (2002), is largely being adhered to. We welcome the reported procedural cooperation in the Iraq disarmament process over recent weeks. We are pleased in particular that to date the UNMOVIC inspections have found no weapons of mass destruction. Iraq's cooperation with spontaneous on-site inspections at more than 300 sites is very commendable.

Furthermore, Iraq's acceptance of aerial surveillance and of interviews of scientists without witnesses, and its appointment of a second commission to search for relevant documentation, are very positive developments. However, the Commission now needs Iraq's continuing efforts fully to comply with resolution 1441 (2002) and to give the Commission its immediate, unconditional and active cooperation on banned weapons that are unaccounted for, in order to resolve existing unresolved issues of disarmament. Such positive collaboration would avert any inclination to wage war. Iraq's goodwill is therefore indispensable.

History teaches us that in many instances disarmament by force is counterproductive and can lead to militancy. As the case of Iraq shows, the result is an endless spiral of aggression and war. We now have peaceful alternatives, and if we consolidate the necessary political will, the world can avert unknown and unprecedented catastrophe.

We therefore commend the efforts of UNMOVIC, supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Until their efforts are concluded and their conclusions or recommendations evaluated by the Security Council, any engagement in war would be

premature and regrettable. We must try painstakingly to avoid it.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Nicaragua, on whom I now call.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (spoke in Spanish): Over the past few weeks, we have been witnessing the vitality of our Organization and of the Security Council, where arduous work has been done for the benefit of the citizens of the world in developing ways to guarantee security for all and to ensure world peace. Our multilateral system continues to offer the only legitimate means of finding solutions to which we are collectively committed; we alone are responsible for our common destiny.

Nicaragua has been following with great concern the situation that has arisen as a result of the lack of proactive Iraqi cooperation in faithfully complying with Security Council resolutions. When a country does not abide by its obligations, it endangers that multilateral system and undermines the good faith that it showed in entering into obligations pursuant to the Charter. We are in favour of multilateral efforts. We would like to see a multilateral system that is capable of exercising a worldwide mandate promptly and effectively. We do not want to see a multilateral system that can be used as a shield against accountability.

In our opinion, resolution 1441 (2002) is clear-cut and specific. It should not now be applied flexibly; nor should it be expanded or interpreted in a new way. We should not delay multilateral acknowledgement of what the inspectors said. Let us make no mistake: the disarmament of Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction is the goal. This is not simply a process of inspectors and inspections; this is a disarmament process.

The inspectors themselves have pointed out Iraq's shortcomings in providing a detailed, exact and complete declaration of its weapons of mass destruction. To date, there has been no clear-cut decision on the part of Iraq to cooperate with the objectives of resolution 1441 (2002) by disarming immediately. After a decade of Security Council resolutions calling for the disarmament of Iraq, concrete, timely and effective measures are required to deal with the threat to international peace and security. Immobility and inaction will undermine trust in our collective resolve and imperil the very credibility of the Organization.

We listened to the reports of Mr. Hans Blix of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei of the International Atomic Energy Agency. They both deserve our appreciation for their tireless work and our support for the work that remains to be done. Nicaragua reaffirms the importance of the United Nations as an international institution for the maintenance of peace and security among nations. We believe, however, that the time has come for this Organization to give proof of its ability to respond immediately in the face of Iraq's non-compliance with Council resolutions.

As a peace-loving country, we are concerned about the repercussions and consequences of an immobile multilateral system. If Iraq does not cooperate with the Council, all the means provided for in the Charter should be used in order to guarantee collective security. We cannot allow the situation brought about by Iraq's non-compliance with the Council's resolutions to jeopardize international security.

After December 1998 there was no monitoring, inspection or verification in Iraq, as required by the Council's resolutions. That is why we agree with Mr. Hans Blix that Iraq must present credible proof of the existence, or of the verifiable destruction, of its weapons of mass destruction. It is Iraq that must allay the suspicions of the international community by providing the facts. The inspections cannot continue indefinitely if Baghdad does not provide prompt, active and effective cooperation.

Resolution 1441 (2002) has truly become the last chance for Iraq. Iraq, however, has not cooperated fully with the inspectors and continues to fall seriously short in its obligations. For that reason, we believe that we must continue with the immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq. Current circumstances demand that our Organization take concrete and timely measures. We cannot allow resolutions to continue to accumulate for another decade without any real effect. The multilateral system must justify its existence and demonstrate the firm and unswerving commitment of the peoples of the United Nations to peace and security.

Through omission, we might seriously undermine world peace. We trust that this Organization will not be blamed for inaction.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Albania, on whom I now call.

Mr. Nesho (Albania): The debate about Iraq is taking on broad dimensions. All nations have a historic responsibility to reflect on the position of the international community and to act in the interests of peace and stability in the world. The possession and production of weapons of mass destruction and the danger posed by their potential use in terrorist acts constitute a real threat to the entire international community.

The Albanian Government has attentively followed the latest developments on Iraq and commends the work done by the United Nations inspectors. But to our understanding, their reports clearly show that Iraq is still in breach of the obligations deriving from the Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution, unanimously adopted, clearly states that Iraq should bring to full and verified completion the disarmament process by ceasing to produce and possess weapons of mass destruction and ending the development of related programmes.

We see that Iraq has to date failed to comply with resolution 1441 (2002), as it has not immediately, actively and unconditionally cooperated with United Nations inspectors. As has often been reiterated in this body, the issue is not whether Iraq has weapons of mass destruction but whether it is cooperating to get rid of them.

The task of inspections in Iraq cannot go on endlessly, because it would weaken the importance of resolution 1441 (2002) and the credibility of the Organization. The international community must be determined to act without wasting time and to send the necessary message of responsibility and determination for the preservation of the international order. Vain promises and empty rhetoric about peace do not prevent crime or secure peace. Recently, we in the Balkans suffered the fatal consequences resulting from the international community's delay in taking the necessary decisions. The mass graves in Srebrenica and Kosovo attest to that sad truth.

In its statement of 5 February 2003, the Vilnius Group of countries, in which Albania participates, stated its concern about the threat of terrorism and of dictatorial regimes that possess weapons of mass destruction, as well as its views regarding democratic values in the world. We appeal to the Security Council to undertake the necessary action in response to the continuous threat that Iraq poses to international peace and security. The Albanian Government understands and supports the commitment of the United States of America and of other nations to avoid the threats of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism.

The determination to prevent terror is a great achievement of the present world civilization. By acting in time and with a long-term vision we will avoid the consequences that might stem from a lack of determination.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Uzbekistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The position of principle of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the issue under discussion was accurately and clearly set out in a statement issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan on 6 February 2003. Its main points are as follows.

> "The problem of Iraq, the implementation of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), the activities of the United Nations inspectors in Iraq and the positions of leading States with regard to resolving this question cannot fail to be of concern today to international public opinion and to the international community, including Uzbekistan.
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> "The statement made by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell at the meeting of the Security Council held on 5 February 2003 and the arguments and reasons he cited are, in our view, a sufficient and convincing reaffirmation of the correctness of the United States position aimed at the use of firmer and more substantial measures to exclude any presence in Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and any stocks and technologies for their production in order to save mankind from this horrendous danger."

In the context of today's discussion, the Republic of Uzbekistan also believes it to be fundamentally important to note the following two issues. First, a solution to this question lies not in increasing the number of inspectors, but in a change in Iraq's attitude towards the issue of disarmament. Secondly, the Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities and

take effective action to compel Iraq to implement resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): It is an honour for me to address this open meeting of the Security Council. I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting, thereby giving smaller delegations such as my own an opportunity to participate in a debate on this crucial matter.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands, having listened to the various statements made by the Government of the United States to the Security Council in recent weeks, affirms its unity with the United States of America and with its determination to ensure that Iraq provides full cooperation and compliance with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002).

The Republic of the Marshall Islands takes immense pride in its close relationship with the United States, and continues to benefit greatly from the generosity of that nation. The people of the Marshall Islands have had personal experience with, and thus have first-hand knowledge of, the extreme power and devastating effects of weapons of mass destruction. The devastation of war is evident to all of us. Our sons and daughters now serving in the United States armed forces are at the forefront of our thoughts, as they are among those being placed in peril.

The Marshall Islands joins with others in expressing the strong belief that the best hope for peace and security lies in Iraq's full cooperation with the inspection teams of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency and in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahendran (Sri Lanka): Sri Lanka would like to join other delegations in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on this issue at the request of the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002), the inspectors of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and of the International Atomic Energy Agency have submitted two reports — the first on 27 January and the second on 14 February. The inspectors' first report mentioned that Iraq had cooperated with the inspection process but that that cooperation lacked substance. The second report indicated an increased level of cooperation on the part of Iraq, but also indicated that vital questions remained unanswered and that Iraq had not been fully complying with the resolution 1441 (2002). A few days ago Iraq acceded to some of the inspectors' key request, including the interviewing of Iraqi scientists and technicians without the presence of Iraqi officials; allowing reconnaissance flights over Iraqi territory by U-2 aircraft; and the issuance of a presidential decree prohibiting the manufacture or import of weapons of mass destruction. The inspectors' third report to the Security Council is expected on 14 March 2003.

The Government of Sri Lanka fervently hopes that Iraq fully complies in substance as well. We believe that would help to avoid a major catastrophe for Iraq's people and would avert a further escalation of tension in the Middle East region.

Considering the human, political and economic consequences of military intervention, the Government of Sri Lanka calls for intensified and early completion of ongoing United Nations and other diplomatic efforts to ensure a peaceful solution to this question.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Shamsi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, I have the honour to convey our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. Allow us also to thank you, Mr. President, for having responded to the call by the Non-Aligned Movement for the convening of this important meeting in order to take up the dimensions of the Iraqi issue and its grave potential consequences, not only for the Gulf States, but also for international peace and security as a whole. Nor can I fail on this occasion to express my appreciation to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of France, for his excellent leadership of the Security Council last month.

The United Arab Emirates has very carefully followed all the developments in the implementation of

resolution 1441 (2002) since its adoption approximately three months ago, believes that this is a major turning point in Iraq's implementation of its commitment and obligation to fully disarm its weapons of mass destruction and proscribed weapons, in accordance with the relevant international resolutions. The important and valuable information provided by Mr. Blix, Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and Mr. ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), on 27 January 2003 clearly shows the progress and the extent of cooperation on the part of the Iraqi Government in facilitating the mission of the international inspectors. The international community cannot deny these results, and we consider them a positive and important step towards a just and comprehensive settlement of the issue of weapons of mass destruction disarmament in Iraq.

The United Arab Emirates fully appreciates the major efforts being made by Mr. Blix, Mr. ElBaradei and their fellow inspectors in verifying the various proscribed weapons programmes in Iraq. It welcomes the important steps taken by the Iraqi side in the past few weeks, including the re-evaluation of its stockpiles after the four years following the departure of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) team. Such steps also involve the infrastructure for UNMOVIC offices in Baghdad, Mosul and Al Basrah; unconditional assistance provided to the inspectors, including the opening up of all sensitive sites and official institutions, homes and public and private properties; providing the necessary guarantees for UNMOVIC aircraft; interviews conducted freely with Iraqi scientists; and, ultimately, a presidential decree on the prohibition of the production, importation and stockpiling of all precursors for the manufacture of proscribed chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic weapons. These are unprecedented, positive developments in Iraqi cooperation, and we believe that they ought to be developed and invested in, instead of being aborted through the threat of waging war.

Like all other States in the region and of the entire international community, the United Arab Emirates has continuously called for the full elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction in order to avoid all the destructive and grave consequences they could have for the security, stability and development of the region and its peoples.

In light of the current sensitive situation, we believe that a firm foundation of mutual confidence is needed, based on cooperation between Iraq and the international inspectors, in order to expedite their mission. We call on the international community to continue bolstering the capabilities and performance of the inspection regime in Iraq. We call on the international community to give the international inspectors the necessary time to complete their mission with full objectivity and balance in such a way as to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

In this regard, we wish to stress the following needs. First, the responsibility and authority of United Nations institutions — particularly the Security Council, which is responsible for dealing with crises and for building peace and security in the world — must be fully respected. We believe this is the legal and political reference point for the continuing action of the international inspectors, in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002).

Secondly, action must be aimed at lifting the inhuman suffering and sanctions imposed on the Iraqi people, as set out in paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991). All unilateral, non-peaceful options should be set aside. These may lead to a new war with grave consequences — not only for the people of Iraq, but also for the States and peoples of the region. This is a region that has not yet finished dealing with and containing all the consequences of the series of wars we have faced in the last three decades.

Thirdly, the Iraqi Government must be called upon to continue its immediate and full cooperation with the inspection regime for the destruction of all its proscribed weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with resolution 1441 (2002) and all other relevant international resolutions. Such cooperation includes providing all written responses and evidence to the international inspectors in order to fill the gaps and answer all outstanding questions relating to biological, chemical and ballistic programmes.

Fourthly, the Iraqi Government must immediately implement all its other outstanding legal obligations, which are a source of great tension in the region. This should be done in accordance with resolutions of the Security Council, and of the League of Arab States as adopted at the last Beirut summit and relating to the settling of the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property, in

full respect for the security, sovereignty and independence of the State of Kuwait.

Fifthly, the international community must not apply double standards. Paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) calls for comprehensive implementation — not partial implementation — of all the requirements for a regime to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction, without exception from the Middle East, including Israel, which occupies Palestinian and Arab land and is alone in possession of lethal nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

In conclusion, as we stand at a very dangerous crossroad between war and peace, we look forward to these deliberations in support of the efforts of the international community for a just, comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Iraq issue. We also stress the need for all relevant parties to show the necessary political will to eliminate the option of a military confrontation and act within international legitimacy in order to save millions of lives and to avoid the economic, social and security consequences of war and to meet the entire world's aspirations for peace and security.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, the representative of Honduras, I would like to discuss a few points of procedure.

First of all, I still have 13 speakers on my list. Not all of them, I understand, are in the Council Chamber right now. We are faced now with the situation where either we could go on and hear the remaining speakers on the list — which might take until 1.30 p.m. if everybody sticks to seven minutes — or we might end up with three or four speakers not having had the opportunity to take the floor. We would then have to reconvene at 3 p.m.

My suggestion is that we try to finish now. This is also a matter of courtesy for the last speakers, because if there are only three or four speakers left for the afternoon session, then most probably they will not get the same audience as they would have here now. So, if the Council agrees, I would propose that we finish now, and I would appeal to all speakers: please stick to the seven minutes as a matter of courtesy to those who come after you.

My second remark is that I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of El Salvador and Zimbabwe in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lagos Pizzati (El Salvador) and Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Honduras.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like all peoples of the world, the people of Honduras is living through times of extreme disquiet and anxiety due to the world situation and the possible consequences for humankind of the solution that the United Nations decides upon in the conflict with Iraq.

Our people, which wishes to live in peace and harmony with all peoples of the world, is doing its utmost to ensure that a full understanding is reached as soon as possible in the present conflict with Iraq in order to safeguard international peace, human rights and the continued normal functioning of the United Nations, which is the most important organization created by mankind to regulate relations among Governments, peoples and individuals, within a framework of law, justice and mutual respect so as to work in concert to secure the progress and well-being of the human race.

Given those goals, it our wish that the United Nations should attempt by all possible means to ensure that the Government of Iraq destroys or effectively eliminates all deadly weapons of mass destruction and that measures are taken to ensure that Iraq will not possess such weapons in the future. Such an objective requires that the United Nations inspectors receive all possible material and technological support and that they receive cooperation in the form of broad information in pertinent areas both within and outside Iraq so that they can determine with reasonable certainty either that the aggressive threat by Iraq no longer exists and will not arise again or that verification is impossible due to the negative attitude of the Government of Iraq. In the latter unfortunate

scenario, the Security Council would be obliged to adopt the appropriate measures to safeguard humankind from criminal, genocidal acts.

We Hondurans, together with all others who desire that peace in the world not be disturbed, support Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his responsible and forceful stance of ensuring that the Government of Iraq respects the world Organization and that no hasty or unwarranted actions are taken which could plunge the world into chaos. Honduras believes that all countries and Governments of the world agree on peace, on the institution of the United Nations and on the preservation of human rights and of the civilization achieved by humankind, which constitutes a set of values that must always be protected and safeguarded.

The dispute among Governments owing to differing perceptions of the facts, to conflicting criteria adopted by different cultures or to struggle over secondary economic interests must not lead humankind to its destruction.

The Government of Iraq must inescapably accept its obligations towards the rest of the world. It cannot shirk its responsibilities or adopt threatening, belligerent stances towards neighbouring peoples. Conduct of that kind is utterly inadmissible in the twenty-first century, which should be an age of respect for the universal rule of law established by the free consensus of all nations of the world. The United Nations represents that new world legal order. The peaceful settlement of the conflict with Iraq will confirm humankind's progress towards creating on planet Earth a way of life that guarantees to all peoples — weak or powerful, great or small — the right to enjoy a satisfactory material and spiritual existence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mauritius.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): In the interest of time, Mr. President, I am going to skip the courtesies to you and to your predecessor.

My delegation would like to thank the Executive Chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Mr. Hans Blix, and the General Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei, for presenting their second periodic reports last Friday. My delegation considers the reports of the inspectors to have been very comprehensive, objective and highly professional. We would like to reiterate our full confidence in Mr. Blix, Mr. ElBaredei and their respective teams of inspectors. We have no doubt that they will continue to do their work with the same dedication and professionalism.

In their reports, both Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei pointed out that they had noted greater cooperation on the part of the Iraqi authorities insofar as process is concerned. However, they still feel that there is a deficit in terms of cooperation on substance. It is extremely important for the Iraqi authorities to understand that resolution 1441 (2002) puts an obligation on Iraq to comply fully with all the requirements of the resolution, leading to the complete and total disarmament of Iraq in the field of weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the steps taken by the Iraqi Government to allow U-2 surveillance flights, and the conduct of private interviews with scientists, and the reported adoption of national legislation prohibiting proscribed activities. But we note that such measures are being taken on an incremental basis and only under the pressure of severe consequences. It is important for Iraq to understand that it is the will of the international community to see Iraq rid itself of weapons of mass destruction and that it should engage in fuller, more proactive and genuine cooperation with the inspectors, whose job, we agree, should be the verification of Iraqi disarmament rather than the search for weapons of mass destruction.

We have noted that on several occasions Iraq has claimed that it does not possess any weapons of mass destruction. If such is indeed the case, it should provide all the necessary evidence that can convince the international community that it has indeed destroyed whatever amounts of biological and chemical weapons it is known to have possessed.

My delegation looks forward to the next report of the inspectors, which we hope will show that Iraq has displayed greater cooperation on substance and provided the necessary evidence as requested by the international community. Iraq must understand that it is being given a chance to cooperate and to come clean.

My delegation considers that in the unfortunate event that no tangible progress is seen in the next report, the Security Council will have to assume its responsibility and take whatever action is necessary

while maintaining and reinforcing its credibility and centrality, as well as its unity. It is to be recalled that resolution 1441 (2002) was adopted unanimously by the Security Council, thereby reflecting the will of the international community to see Iraq get rid of its weapons of mass destruction.

This is the time for Iraq to choose full compliance with resolution 1441 (2002) and pave the way for the lifting of sanctions. The Iraqi Government must avoid any step that would increase the suffering of its people. At a time when a large number of countries are suffering from abject poverty, malnutrition and lack of development, addressing which requires significant resources, the consequences of war and the ensuing reconstruction will not only aggravate the situation of the Iraqi population but also represent a major setback in addressing global development programmes. We therefore appeal to the Iraqi Government to comply fully and unconditionally with the inspectors and to disclose whatever it failed to disclose in its 12,000-page declaration.

The President: The Permanent Observer of the Holy See being absent, I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): We are meeting at a time of great uncertainty. Many people are concerned. At the same time, the Council has given Iraq one last chance to comply with the demands of the international community.

Time has not run out. The use of force is not unavoidable. We must do everything in our power to achieve a peaceful solution. But for this to happen, it requires the immediate, active and unconditional cooperation of Iraq, as stated in Security Council resolution 1441 (2002).

It is with the greatest concern that we note that Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei, in their reports to the Security Council on 27 January and again on 14 February, described Iraqi cooperation on process, but no real breakthrough on substance.

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) need urgent answers to their highly important and legitimate questions. What has happened to the weapons of mass destruction that remain unaccounted for?

We should not have to beg for these answers. Iraq is required to provide them. They should have been given a long time ago.

Norway agrees that the inspections should continue. But more inspectors or better equipment cannot by themselves resolve the outstanding issues. We want to recognize the valuable efforts that UNMOVIC and the IAEA are undertaking under difficult conditions. But, as Mr. Blix stated last Friday, the period of disarmament through inspections could be short if Iraq chose to cooperate fully, as required.

It is a challenge to the Council and an affront to the international community at large that Iraq is withholding full cooperation.

The authorities in Baghdad cannot fail to understand that it is in their hands only to demonstrate how present uncertainties can be eliminated and a peaceful outcome ensured.

As a former member of the Security Council that supported the adoption of resolution 1441 (2002), Norway wishes to make the following points.

First, any further steps with regard to Iraq must be anchored in the Security Council, as the pre-eminent body responsible for upholding international peace and security.

Secondly, we will see progress only if pressure is upheld. The international community must therefore remain united in its approach to Iraq. Similarly, it is of utmost importance that the members of the Security Council seek a common approach.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Iraq must recognize the full extent of the serious consequences stated in resolution 1441 (2002), while terminating 12 years of disregard for the authority of our world Organization. This would pave the way for the peaceful outcome that we all seek.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Paraguay, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Loizaga (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish first to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate of the Security Council. Given the developments stemming from the question of Iraq's compliance with resolution 1441 (2002), it seems to us to be timely and appropriate for the general membership of the United Nations to have the opportunity to express its views on an extremely

serious issue that is of profound concern to the entire international community.

Our participation in this debate is inspired by a constructive spirit, which is only fitting in the case of a founding country of the United Nations that sincerely believes and trusts in the multilateral system, that respects and complies with the norms of international law, and that believes in the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Government of Paraguay takes the view that the path of inspections is the right mechanism to guarantee the effective disarmament of Iraq. In this respect, we pay tribute to the work that Mr. Hans Blix and Mr. Mohamed ElBaradei have been doing, and we are grateful for the detailed reports that they have presented to date concerning the conduct of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections in Iraq.

However, what we have heard in the reports given by the chief inspectors indicates to us that Iraq is continuing to take an ambivalent attitude to the process of inspections. Although progress has been noted that might point to a change in attitude on the part of the Iraq regime with respect to what the international community is demanding, such a change must be immediate and genuine.

The inspection process must continue and be bolstered. The inspectors must have the time that they require to carry out their tasks. However, the inspections cannot continue indefinitely, especially if they are not receiving full cooperation from the Iraqi Government. The seriousness of the situation demands immediate responses, without delay, from the Iraqi regime.

Paraguay feels that the international community's message in the face of the developments relating to this issue is clear-cut and unequivocal. The Government of Iraq must disarm. This is the core of resolution 1441 (2002), adopted by the Council. The Government must comply immediately, unconditionally and fully with its obligations under resolution 1441 (2002) and other relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Likewise, it must step up its cooperation with the UNMOVIC and IAEA inspectors, without further delaying tactics, and must provide all the information and documentation required by the inspectors so as to achieve effective implementation of the Council's resolutions.

The resolutions of the Security Council must be implemented in full and without delay. This is the obligation imposed on us by our Charter, which was acceded to by all Member States by virtue of a free and sovereign choice.

The Security Council, an organ to whose member States we have entrusted the responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, should play an essential role in this crisis. As stated by our Charter, it is the only body that can legitimately authorize the use of force.

For these reasons, we agree with the Secretary-General that the unity of the Council is the foundation for any legitimate and forceful international action. The robustness of a system of collective security such as that of the United Nations hinges on the unity of the Security Council. Only a united Council will be able credibly to take the necessary decisions to achieve the goal of disarming the Iraqi regime.

For all of these reasons, Paraguay reaffirms its full confidence in the ability of the United Nations and the Security Council to resolve international disputes. We join the great majority of the members of the international community in affirming that all necessary efforts should be exhausted to find a peaceful solution to this crisis, reserving the use of force as a last resort. The Government of Iraq will be responsible for the consequences that may ensue. Its resolve will dictate whether the solution is peaceful, as we all desire.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iceland, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ingólfsson (Iceland): Allow me to add the voice of the Government of Iceland to this important debate. The Security Council is now faced with one of its greatest challenges in modern times. Can it cope with its fundamental objective, which is to maintain international peace and security? Hopes are high among States Members of the United Nations. During the past few months the Security Council has demonstrated resolve and unity in addressing the serious threat to international peace deriving from the failure by Iraq to respect its obligations under Article 25 of the Charter to "agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council".

Through resolution 1441 (2002), the Council has unanimously given Iraq an ultimatum and a final opportunity to comply with its demands. They are the

full and effective disarmament of Iraq, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council stretching back to 1991. Baghdad should not be in any doubt concerning what is required of it.

Through its immediate, active and unconditional cooperation, Iraq has the opportunity — and indeed an obligation — to provide for the easing of the grave situation that the international community now faces. There is still time for a peaceful resolution of this crisis, and it is our sincere hope that it can be achieved.

The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency have our full support, and we commend the able leadership of Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei. We do not believe, however, that a strengthened inspection regime will necessarily provide us with the answers so long awaited from the Iraqi authorities. What is lacking is Iraq's demonstration of full cooperation and its provision of all the required information without further delay.

Mr. Blix has stated that "the period of disarmament through inspection could be short if Iraq chooses to cooperate fully, as required by the Security Council". To that end, the inspectors should be given more time. Firm pressure must be maintained.

However, the international community's apparent lack of unity with regard to the ways to proceed has been of some concern. It is of the utmost importance that unanimous decisions by the Security Council be respected and that Member States be prepared to enforce them. The threat of serious consequences, as stipulated in resolution 1441 (2002), must not be compromised. The credibility of the Council and of the United Nations is at stake.

The use of force must always be the last resort for the Security Council. If, however, other measures provided to it by the Charter have proved to be inadequate, the Council must face its responsibility.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Canada, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): The work undertaken by the countries represented around this table today is of perhaps unprecedented importance. History will judge the United Nations and the Security Council on the way in which they will manage the Iraqi crisis. Throughout the world, people are making their voices heard and are demanding a peaceful settlement of this crisis. No one wants a war. But people know Saddam Hussain's record of massive human rights violations only too well, and they know that, equipped with weapons of mass destruction, he represents a great threat to international peace and security in the region.

Since the inspectors withdrew in 1998, we have had no proof that Iraq has rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction. In fact, we have reasons to fear that the opposite is true.

(*spoke in English*)

As the United Nations Special Commission and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) have both reported, there are still major weapons unaccounted for and essential questions unanswered, especially with regard to chemical and biological weapons and missile systems. That is why the Council unanimously decided, in resolution 1441 (2002), that Iraq should be given one last chance to answer these questions convincingly and to cooperate with the inspectors in disarming itself voluntarily, actively and transparently.

While we may be seeing the beginning of the kind of cooperation that should have been forthcoming years ago, this cooperation remains last-minute, process-oriented and grudging. As chief inspector Blix told the Council on 27 January, Saddam Hussain clearly has not fully accepted his obligation to disarm. Recent cooperation from Baghdad has come only in response to intense international pressure, including the deliberate and useful build-up of United States and United Kingdom military forces in the region.

The job of the inspectors is to verify Iraq's disarmament, not to seek out weapons of mass destruction on their own. More time for inspectors, or even an intensified inspection process — as suggested by some — could be useful, but only if Iraq decides to cooperate fully, actively and transparently, beginning now. The decision is Iraq's to make.

As Mr. Blix said on 14 February, the period for disarmament through inspection could still be short if Iraq were willing to cooperate. Some see merit in making absolutely clear to Iraq what is required. The world simply must have the answers to the as-yet-unanswered questions, especially about the disposition of VX gas, mustard gas, anthrax and botulinum.

In order to spell out clearly to Iraq what is expected of it and within what timelines, we suggest that the Council direct the inspectors to lay out the list of key remaining disarmament tasks immediately and to establish which of those tasks most urgently require evidence of Iraqi compliance. The Council should also establish an early deadline for Iraqi compliance. Such a process would provide the Council with a basis on which to assess Iraqi compliance. More important, it would allow the Security Council and the international community to judge whether Iraq is cooperating on substance and not just on process.

Everyone here understands what disarmament looks like. The case study of South Africa is often cited, because that country took the decision to get out of the business of weapons of mass destruction entirely and did so with determination and transparency and purpose. Iraq can do the same if it so decides.

This crisis is not only about weapons of mass destruction; it is also about people — especially the people of Iraq, who have already suffered under Saddam Hussain through two wars and a decade of sanctions. The humanitarian situation in that country is already grave. Sixty per cent of the population depends on the food distributed under the oil-for-food programme. Children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable, and they need protection. For years, Member States have called on humanitarian agencies to get ahead of the curve in anticipation of a possible crisis. Canada therefore applauds the efforts of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to undertake critical contingency planning. It is crucially important that they do so.

The Government of Canada urges all the members of the Council to keep the welfare of the Iraqi people at the heart of their deliberations. As Prime Minister Chrétien stated in Chicago on 13 February, the whole world hopes that Saddam Hussain will act, even at this late hour, by respecting the wishes of the world community. And by complying with successive United Nations resolutions, including resolution 1441 (2002), he can ensure that his people are spared further suffering.

The Government and the people of Canada want a peaceful resolution to this crisis, and we believe that a peaceful resolution remains possible. The world asks that the Council spare no effort to try to find common ground. Division would have profound consequences for regional and international peace and security, for the authority of this Council and for the standing of the United Nations itself.

Multilateral institutions are essential to managing our ever more integrated world. The world needs the United Nations to emerge from this crisis strengthened, and not diminished. Iraq is only the latest of what will surely be other threats to our common peace and security, not least from international terrorism. A strengthened United Nations will serve everyone's interests, big and small.

The Government and people of Canada are fully prepared to accept the judgements of the inspectors and the decisions of this Council. Canada will assume its responsibilities accordingly.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Georgia, on whom I now call.

Mr. Adamia (Georgia): I should like to express my delegation's gratitude to you, Sir, for convening this meeting at a very important juncture for the Security Council and the entire international community.

The illegal possession of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and aggressive separatism, often intertwined, pose threats to the very foundations of the international system. In this situation, it is the discharge by the Security Council of its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security that is being put to a highly critical test.

From our tragic experience of ongoing conflicts in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region of Georgia, we have learned many important things. First and foremost, we have come to better appreciate the value of peace; at the same time, we have learned that a high toll is always to be paid when the international community is not in a position to act in concert and resolutely in situations affecting international peace and security.

Peace should always be given a chance and, clearly, this is the substance of the offer extended to Iraq by Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). At the same time, however, we cannot afford inaction as Iraq continues to possess weapons of mass destruction that represent a threat to international peace and security. The Iraqi regime has failed to meet the important requirements of resolution 1441 (2002): full, accurate

and complete declaration and voluntary, unconditional and active cooperation with the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Therefore, we would like to associate ourselves with those delegations that have called on the Security Council to meet its responsibilities and to take effective action in order to secure Iraq's immediate compliance. No one should be allowed to breach their obligations under the Security Council's mandatory resolutions, much less when these breaches put international peace and security at stake. Otherwise, the appropriate consequences should be imminent.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Lebanon, on whom I now call.

Mr. Diab (Lebanon) (spoke in Arabic): The Security Council is meeting at a moment of grave and fateful consequence. The weeks — indeed, the days — to come would seem to be crucial in defining the course of events and determining the fate of peace and security in our Arab region. The security, integrity, pride, dignity and welfare of its people are of paramount importance to us.

The discussions of the Security Council have proven the value of the work undertaken by the United Nations inspectors. The inspectors' reports have provided no evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Therefore, any party of good faith cannot but agree to give the United Nations inspectors adequate time to fulfil their mandate under Security Council resolution 1441 (2002). The completion of that process is the only viable option in conformity with international legitimacy and the imperatives of international law, and stands in stark contrast to the course of war. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of Member States advocate a peaceful settlement of the crisis.

In the past, Iraq has been forthcoming in its response to the demands of the international community for the readmission of United Nations inspectors. The most recent briefings by Mr. ElBaradei and Mr. Blix have revealed clear progress in the inspection process in many spheres, thanks to Iraq's cooperation with the inspectors. Let me cite a few examples, without being exhaustive: the additional documents provided by Iraq on 8 and 9 February; the establishment by Iraq of two commissions entrusted with detecting any prohibited materials and armaments and with providing the papers documenting their disposal; Iraq's acceptance of private interviews with Iraqi scientists and technicians and its provision of additional lists of such personnel; Iraq's acceptance of flights of U-2 surveillance and other aircraft over its territory; and Iraq's enactment of a legislative decree prohibiting the import and manufacture of weapons of mass destruction, pursuant to relevant Security Council resolutions.

While we recognize Iraq's cooperation with the international inspectors, we call upon it nonetheless to cooperate proactively and to build mutual trust with them so that they may fulfil their mandate on behalf of the Security Council. There is no doubt that Iraq's ongoing proactive cooperation will ensure, as Mr. ElBaradei has said, the high-level guarantees demanded by the Security Council.

We cannot but note with deep regret the application of unequal standards, especially in regard to the monitoring and disarming of Israel's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, which Israel refuses to subject to any inspections system. We therefore call on the Security Council to ensure the removal of Israeli weapons of mass destruction, which pose a serious threat to the Arab collective security system and international peace and security. Their elimination would be prelude to turning the entire Middle East into a zone free from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, as set out in Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

In this regard, we were encouraged by Mr. ElBaradei's words in his briefing last Friday to the effect that the existence of an invasive verification system of the International Atomic Energy Agency that would help the Agency to assess the existence or non-existence of a nuclear armament programme in any State would be possible even in the absence of full cooperation on the part of the State concerned.

The Arab summit held in Beirut last March contributed to the restoration of confidence between Iraq and Kuwait. At that summit the Republic of Iraq gave assurances of its commitment to respecting the independence, sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and unity of Kuwait by avoiding any action similar to the events of 1990. Those affirmations were warmly welcomed at the international level and constituted a preliminary step towards Iraq's cooperation in an

expeditious and final settlement of the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and the return of Kuwaiti property, pursuant to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The prevention of war against Iraq does not, of course, mean preserving the status quo in the situation between it and Kuwait. Instead, we must be committed to revitalizing the resolutions adopted at the Beirut summit in all their aspects so that a comprehensive solution can be reached between those two States, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity we wish to see preserved, along with the welfare of their people.

The unilateral launching of war against Iraq would represent a departure from United Nations resolutions, a contravention of international legality and an end to the existing world order, which has guaranteed international peace and security since the Second World War. The consequences of a war against Iraq would not be limited to its people and its territorial integrity. Rather, there would be consequences at the political, economic, social and humanitarian levels in all Arab States, which have continued to suffer as a result of wars, because of continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the racist policies pursued by Israel against the Palestinian people.

The dividing line between the option of war and peace is the Charter. The Secretary-General has always reminded us of the need to be guided by the Charter in seeking all resolutions to conflict. In defining its options, the Security Council must be guided by the will of the majority of its Member States, in keeping with the purposes and principles of the Charter, in order to maintain international peace and security and avoid war and its potential tragic consequences, from which the world could be spared.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Serbia and Montenegro, to whom I call.

Mrs. Nikčević (Serbia and Montenegro): Serbia and Montenegro has been following the crisis over Iraq with great attention and concern, well aware that it threatens international peace and security. The crisis is fraught with serious consequences, not only for the Middle East but for the international order as such.

Iraq must comply fully and unequivocally with all provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly resolution 1441 (2002). That resolution, by which the Iraqi regime was given a chance to fulfil its international obligations as mandated by the United Nations, and the return of inspectors are the last and the opportunity that the international community presented to Baghdad to resolve the problem. It is up to the Iraqi regime to take this opportunity and end this crisis by fully cooperating with the international inspectors and disarming, as demanded by the Security Council. Failing to do so, the Iraqi regime will bear all the consequences.

Serbia and Montenegro fully supports resolution 1441 (2002) and the work of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It has followed UNMOVIC and IAEA reports with great attention and is of the opinion that the Security Council should consider them and assess the degree of Iraq's cooperation on a continuous basis.

There is no doubt that every effort must be made to preserve international peace and security, strengthen the process of non-proliferation of arms of mass destruction and secure Iraq's full cooperation with the United Nations. Such full cooperation means that Iraqi authorities must immediately provide unhindered access to all relevant information, documents, locations and persons to the inspectors. Serbia and Montenegro considers that Iraq must without delay disarm comprehensively and verifiably and provide credible evidence that it has done so. That is the road to a peaceful solution of the crisis for which we are all striving.

Great responsibility lies with the Security Council, which under the Charter has the primary role in maintaining international peace and security. This is particularly true of its responsibility to see to it that all its resolutions are implemented and to take appropriate measures if they are not. The Council should therefore continue to be seized of the situation in Iraq and invest every effort within its powers mandated by the Charter to make Iraq comply with resolution 1441 (2002). The authority of the Security Council must not be questioned, and the patience of the international community should not be tested.

Sharing the profound global concern over the crisis in Iraq and convinced that the unity of the international community is very important in the current situation, Serbia and Montenegro pledges its full support to all decisions of the Security Council and

in particular stands ready to contribute to its efforts to implement resolution 1441 (2002).

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Latvia, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia): Latvia has aligned itself with the European Council conclusions of 17 February. However, we still feel it is necessary to express our views on this critical issue.

Latvia would like to thank Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei for their reports. We express our appreciation to their inspection teams for the work they are doing in Iraq.

Latvia has repeatedly stressed that Iraq must fully comply with its international obligations and immediately rid itself of its weapons of mass destruction, which present a clear threat to world peace and security.

Over the past 12 years the Security Council has repeatedly demanded Iraq's disarmament in 17 resolutions, which have failed to discourage Iraq from developing its weapons of mass destruction. Resolution 1441 (2002) has offered Iraq the last chance to fulfil its previous commitments and disarm. Iraq still remains in material breach of its commitments under that resolution.

It is the responsibility of Iraq to prove that this disarmament is taking place. The inspectors' task is not to play hide and seek with Iraqi authorities; the inspectors are there to register the disarmament. Latvia urges Iraq to take advantage of this last opportunity presented by resolution 1441 (2002). The responsibility of maintaining peace rests squarely on Iraq's shoulders.

As the European Council conclusions affirm, the united stance of the international community, backed by military force, has slowly moved Iraq in the direction of more cooperation. Both of these elements will continue to be essential tools to resolve the crisis.

Latvia regards the use of force as the last resort. Nevertheless, it is for the Iraqi regime to end this crisis by complying with the demands of the Security Council. This requires an immediate change of attitude on the part of Iraqi authorities. If this is not forthcoming, only Iraq will be responsible for the serious consequences that may follow.

Latvia will stand together with our allies in the international community as it deals effectively with the threat posed by Iraq to world peace and security. The credibility of the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, is at stake here, and Latvia calls upon the Council to take the necessary and appropriate action in response to Iraq's continuing threat to international peace and security. Let us not forget that only Saddam Hussain benefits from discord within the Security Council.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Zimbabwe, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe): My delegation extends its heartfelt condolences to the people of the Republic of Korea and the United States over the loss of life that occurred a few days ago in their countries.

I want to associate my delegation with the official position adopted by the African Union that unilateral military action against Iraq would adversely affect Africa's stability and development.

During the last few weeks, this Council has witnessed an assault on the principle of multilateralism by a determined and impatient ad hoc coalition, which believes that might is right. The role and importance of the United Nations cannot be overemphasized in the settlement of disputes and the preservation of peace and security. Indeed, even former United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, a Republican by political persuasion, agrees that:

> "There is no dispute that the vast range of UN activities are indispensable. There is no place for meetings with people where otherwise the fact of the meeting might be controversial than the annual sessions of the General Assembly. There are many occasions when a negotiation has been completed, where the mechanism which the United Nations provides for observing compliance with the agreement would be very difficult to replace if not impossible to replace."

The United Nations setting and its emphasis on cooperation resonate with former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott's assertion that:

> "in a fashion and to an extent that is unique in the history of great Powers, the United States defines its strength — indeed its very greatness — not in terms of its ability to achieve or maintain dominance over others, but in terms of its ability to work with others in the interest of the international community as a whole. American

foreign policy is consciously intended to advance universal values".

Those pronouncements by Henry Kissinger and Strobe Talbott are not the ramblings of two old men showing off at a public speaking contest. Rather, those statements by renowned United States public servants capture the essence of multilateralism. I retrieved them from the annals of history to quicken our memory lest we forget.

Germany has reminded us that the sanctions regime imposed to encourage Iraq's compliance with its disarmament obligations has been more effective in ridding Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction than the Gulf war itself. Let me add that the sanctions regime was made possible because of cooperation. It is true that a Member State can engage in individual and collective measures of self-defence even without the United Nations but, as is shown by the Iraq case, Security Council authority has assisted United States policy by adding the teeth of economic sanctions, extending a broad political umbrella and authorizing on-site monitoring on foreign-State territory.

The Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mr. ElBaradei, speaking on 14 February 2003, submitted to the Council that the Agency could carry out its mandate without Iraqi cooperation. That should put to rest the concerns of those who want us to believe otherwise.

While my delegation is not suggesting that Iraq should not cooperate with the inspectors, we must give serious consideration to the Arab proverb that we heard from the Iraqi Permanent Representative in the Council Chamber last week that "an empty hand has nothing to give" (*S/PV.4707, p. 31*). Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei have informed us that they have found no evidence to suggest that Iraq has reactivated its weapons of mass destruction programme, and we must abide by their findings.

It is the bounden duty of the Security Council to support the inspectors — whose mandate, by the way, is not to find fault but to verify Iraq's disarmament.

Observations by the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission and the IAEA that they have not found Iraq in material breach of resolution 1441 (2002) and that Baghdad is proactively supporting the inspectors by encouraging its scientists to accept private interviews with the inspectors and by allowing reconnaissance flights are welcome and should be encouraged.

I was present in the Security Council last Friday and heard the thunderous applause that punctuated France's statement. I would like to take this opportunity to identify my delegation with the leadership France has assumed in guiding the Security Council back to its core business of providing global peace and security. The French proposals and the offers made by other members of the Council to assist in the disarmament process of Iraq are a milestone in that process.

Let us remember that resolution 1441 (2002) deals with the disarmament of Iraq and has nothing to do with regime change. Resolution 1441 (2002) remains a beacon of hope and the only legitimate road map for verifying Iraq's disarmament.

The President: The next speaker is the Permanent Observer of the Holy See, on whom I now call.

Archbishop Martino (Holy See): Thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to express the Holy See's deep concern about the Iraqi issue in the Security Council Chamber, where issues related to international peace and security are debated in order to save the world from the scourge of war. I am pleased to recall on this occasion the successful meeting of Secretary-General Kofi Annan with His Holiness Pope John Paul II yesterday evening at the Vatican.

Since the very beginning, the Holy See has always recognized the international community's irreplaceable role in resolving the issue of Iraq's compliance with the provisions of United Nations resolutions.

In this regard, the Holy See realizes that the international community is rightly worried and that it is addressing a just and urgent cause: the disarmament of arsenals of mass destruction — a threat surfacing not just in a single region but, unfortunately in other parts of our world. The Holy See is convinced that we must make efforts to draw strength from the wealth of peaceful tools provided by international law; to resort to force would not be just. To the grave consequences for a civilian population that has already been tested long enough are being added the dark prospect of tension and conflict between peoples and cultures and

the regrettable reintroduction of war as a way to resolve untenable situations.

The Holy See is closely following developments on the ground and expresses its support for the efforts of the international community to resolve the crisis within the sphere of international legality. For this purpose and with this mind, His Holiness Pope John Paul II recently sent to Baghdad a special envoy, who met with President Saddam Hussain and delivered a message from the Pope stressing, inter alia, the need for concrete commitments in faithful adherence to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. A similar message has also been conveyed to Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, who visited the Pope on 14 February. Moreover, in view of the devastating aftermath of a possible military intervention, the special envoy of the Pope made an appeal to the conscience of all those who have a role to play in determining the future of the crisis in the coming days because, in the end, it is conscience that will have the last word, as it is stronger than all strategies, all ideologies and all religions.

The Holy See is convinced that even though the process of inspections appears somewhat slow, it remains an effective path that could lead to the building of a consensus, which, if widely shared by nations, would make it almost impossible for any Government to act otherwise without risking international isolation. The Holy See is therefore of the view that it is also the proper path to an agreed and honourable resolution of the problem, which, in turn, could provide the basis for a real and lasting peace.

War is never just another means that one can choose to employ for settling differences between nations. As the Charter of the United Nations and international law itself remind us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option, in accordance with very strict conditions and without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after military operations.

On the issue of Iraq, the vast majority of the international community is calling for a diplomatic resolution of the dispute and for exploring all avenues towards a peaceful settlement. That call should not be ignored. The Holy See encourages the parties concerned to keep open the dialogue that could bring about solutions in preventing a possible war, and urges the international community to assume its responsibility in dealing with any failings by Iraq.

Before I conclude my statement, allow me to echo, in this Chamber of peace, the hope-inspiring words of John Paul II's special envoy to Iraq: "Peace is still possible in Iraq and for Iraq. The smallest step over the next few days is worth a great leap towards peace".

The President: The representative of Iraq has asked for the floor to make a brief statement. I give him the floor.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me, through you, Mr. President, to express our gratitude to all those delegations — that is to say, the vast majority of delegations — that have expressed their concern over the Iraqi crisis and that have advocated peace and opposition to war. In advocating peace they are emphasizing the fact that they value the noble principles upon which the Organization and the Security Council were founded: saving the world from the scourge of war and maintaining international peace and security through peaceful means.

At the same time, I also understand the positions of States that sided with the extreme stance of the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Their reasons for doing so are known to us and to them. I would merely like to call upon them to consider this issue carefully and to avoid taking hasty decisions in the future. Issues of war and peace imply a grave moral and historical responsibility. Careful consideration entails understanding what Iraq is doing and what the international inspectors are doing. Simultaneously, it also means accurately ascertaining the true position of the United States and the United Kingdom.

But, what I fail to understand is the kind of language employed by some speakers — truly debased language that is not customarily heard in the Council, which I shall not go into in any detail. Nevertheless, allow me to point out the following.

First of all, there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Secondly, Iraq will continue to cooperate constructively and productively with the inspections and will make every necessary effort in that regard. Let me also reassure those who have called on Iraq to cooperate that Iraq is determined to do so, both on substance and on process, in order to cut off at the

knees any allegation to the effect that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction.

Let me also say that there are no real, serious problems in our relations with the inspectors. However, there are outstanding issues concerning disarmament. What is required of Iraq is not that it hand over weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is to hand over documents and other evidence attesting to its being free of weapons of mass destruction. In fact, that is what Iraq is doing. We are confident that no one will find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, because there are none. Yet, some wish to exploit these disarmament issues. I call upon those who have stood side by side with the United States and have supported the use of military force to consider and examine the reports of the United Nations so as to ascertain what the outstanding issues are. They do not relate to weapons of mass destruction; they relate to evidence and documents. That is precisely what Iraq is working to provide. We are doing our utmost in that regard.

Iraq has therefore permitted everything that has been described by the great majority of those who have spoken here on behalf of the international community. Iraq has opened every door and has allowed everything it possibly can allow. The inspectors have merely to carry out their work in a targeted and objective manner, away from the pressures that are being brought to bear upon them through the media and directly the United States and the United Kingdom.

The President: There are no further speakers remaining on my list. We have thus concluded the present stage of our consideration of the item on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.